

Managing stock availability for post-protest recovery

By [Hendrik Bredenkamp](#)

28 Jul 2021

Managing stock availability has always been important but it became more so as e-commerce gained traction due to how we now live and the effect it had on our shopping experience. But the challenges in managing stock have never been so acute as they are now for retailers affected by the looting that swept through KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng mid-July 2021.



Hendrik Bredenkamp, GM of Nec Xon Retail

Manufacturing facilities, warehouses, distribution centres (DC), retail outlets and the vehicles used to shift goods between them were all affected. Simply knowing if stock was available, where it was, and when it would likely reach shelves to make it accessible to customers, was a major challenge. For some, it still is because they don't have the means to rapidly and accurately get back on track.

Dozens of household brand name retailers had hundreds of stores looted, burned or wrecked. Amidst the clean-up and isolated continuing action, they somehow had to activate the supplies and resources from numerous DCs to where people could access it.

Value of integrated digital systems

With many stores closed, some customers who were in dire need, had to know where they could buy everything from basic food stuffs to medical supplies. Retailers with integrated digital systems linking the supply chain to the storefront and e-commerce platforms were able to provide the quality of experience that saved lives, businesses and thousands of jobs.

As retail teams moved back in to return order, they could quickly and accurately assess stock using the features of integrated digital retail systems, including electronic shelf labels. With their store infrastructure more quickly back in place, thanks to wireless and infrared technology, their packers could use flashing labels to correctly place incoming stock. Price, stock level and other updates were done thousands of times per minute as required.

The widespread violence left many people feeling unsafe and unwilling to venture out. That drove up demand for e-commerce click-and-collect as well as home deliveries. Pick to light and near real-time stock availability updates, as well as information on pending deliveries from DCs, helped retailers keep their customers informed and supplied.



With 136 stores hit, scale of destruction "heartbreaking" - Pick n Pay CEO

23 Jul 2021



The technical challenges behind the quality of customer experiences that people have come to expect are complex. While the ability to provide consolidated systems via comprehensive cloud and managed services generally transforms retail and customer experiences, it proved to be a critical difference immediately after the protests.

When business interruption was unavoidable, more than 5-million electronic shelf labels at over 530 stores helped some retailers get back to serving their communities faster and more accurately. And it helped restore order amidst the chaos so that ordinary people could get on with their lives.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hendrik Bredenkamp, GM of Nec Xon Retail.

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>